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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USUN NEW YORK 001008

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SUBJECT: UN/IRAQ: S/I AMBASSADOR JEFFREY ON AN IRAQ COMPACT

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Bolton, Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Begin Summary. S/I Ambassador Jim Jeffrey briefed UN U/SYG Gambari and SRSB for Iraq Qazi May 9 on the proposal to develop an "Iraq Compact," whereby UNAMI would work closely with the newly elected Iraqi government to help al-Maliki's cabinet expand Iraq's partnership with the international community. The Compact would be somewhat similar to the Afghan model; it would focus particularly on foreign assistance, but cover other general subjects of international engagement. Gambari promised consideration of this "important initiative," but cautioned that there are substantial differences between Iraq and Afghanistan and opined that any new process must be tailored to the realities of Iraq. Qazi asked if we envisioned the UN playing a role in the formation of the "first 100 days" agenda contemplated by the new government. Gambari committed to a UN review of this "complicated endeavor" and promised to provide a follow-up contact. In a subsequent conversation with USUN May 11, Gambari special assistant Siqueira said the U.S. proposal signals a "new policy direction" for the U.S. and the UN, requiring the UN to "step back and think about it."

¶2. (C) Amb Jeffrey and Qazi also discussed Qazi's proposed peace initiative, which Qazi described as a "bottom-up process" requested by the Iraqis and supported by factions as diverse as Muqtada al-Sadr and Tawafuq. While welcoming any initiative that would reduce sectarian strife, Amb Jeffrey made clear that UNAMI should guard against activity that would undermine the formal Iraqi political process. In our view, the major reconciliation effort was the set up of a democratically-elected parliament and the establishment of a broad-based inclusive Iraqi government that would start addressing underlying national needs. The UN reported that visiting Egyptian Foreign Minister Abul Gheit had said the Arab League was unlikely to host the meeting on Iraq notionally scheduled for June 22. (Comment: Subsequently we have heard that this meeting might in fact be on at that date.) Qazi said he had frozen his efforts to convoke a regional Baghdad-based contact group until after the Iraqi government formation. End Summary.

New UNAMI Role

¶3. (C) Amb Jeffrey, joined by Treasury DAS for Africa and

the Middle East Ahmed Saeed, NEA/I/ECON Laird Treiber, and USUN deputy polcouns Molly Phee, met May 9 with UN U/SYG for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari and SRSG for Iraq Ashraf Qazi. Gambari and Qazi were joined by Gambari's special assistant Steven Siqueria (who spent the previous year in Iraq as Qazi's special assistant), UNAMI staffer Alan Fellows, direction of the Asia and Pacific division for the UN's department of political affairs (DPA) Michael Williams, and DPA Iraq desk officer Jehangir Khan. Gambari has served as the UN's interlocutor for the U.S.-UN strategic dialogue on Iraq led by Amb Jeffrey.

14. (C) Recalling discussions last fall between the UN and the U.S. about the appropriate role for UNAMI once the Iraqi political transition was complete, Amb Jeffrey explained that in the wake of the remarkable political progress in Iraq since al-Maliki's selection as Prime Minister, the President and the Secretary now see a new opportunity for a stronger international effort to support the new GOI. Expressing appreciation for the vital role played to date by Qazi and UNAMI, Amb Jeffrey said it was time to further engage the international community. He said the USG had reviewed various models, and concluded that the Afghanistan Compact, which is facilitating a conditioned flow of international assistance based on specific, measurable performance standards, deserves consideration.

15. (C) Citing the leading role of former UN envoy to Afghanistan Jean Arnault in forging a set of interconnecting commitments between Afghanistan's National Development Strategy and states and parties from the international community, Amb Jeffrey solicited the views of Gambari and Qazi on the prospects of a similar effort for Iraq. Acknowledging that last summer's Brussels conference was not

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tied to an institutional process, Amb Jeffrey said we envisioned the development of an Iraq Compact to take place over the next few months. He said the political-economic-security triad that governed the Iraq UNSCRs and the coalition effort should be carried forward in any compact, although there would be special emphasis on the economic and assistance portfolios. Saeed addressed the economic component, clarifying that it would be important for the UN to clearly delineate its role, including the contributions of UN agencies such as UNDP, and that of the World Bank and the IMF.

Fleshing Out the Details

16. (C) Gambari said the UN had been conducting an internal review of its role in Iraq, as the UN shares the U.S. assessment that the formation of the new government creates new opportunities. The UN review, however, had been tied to the language in the Iraq UNSCRs, particularly the core functions of human rights, reconstruction and development, the constitutional review process, provincial elections, etc.; Amb Jeffrey noted this language was perfectly compatible with the concept of a compact. Offering what he characterized as a preliminary reaction, Gambari acknowledged the UN's comparative advantage in facilitating engagement between developing governments and the international community. He said he saw some similarities between Afghanistan and Iraq, but saw more substantial differences, and opined that any new process must be tailored to the realities of Iraq. He said the Brussels effort lacked a follow-up mechanism and this lesson should be incorporated into any new effort. Gambari told Amb Jeffrey that the compact is a "very important initiative" and he would reflect further.

17. (C) Qazi raised the prospect of a "first 100 days" agenda to be developed by al-Maliki's government, and asked whether the USG envisioned holding a conference to secure additional pledges. Amb Jeffrey explained that we had held preliminary

consultations about the compact proposal with the Iraqis and the British, as well as the Canadians, who had so ably led the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, or IRFFI). He said we were considering a steering group, and a kick-off conference would be appropriate. Qazi wondered whether the name "compact" would be ideal, observing that Iraqis considered their country more advanced than Afghanistan and that the use of the term might also confuse matters in the international community. Qazi said he recalled the Secretary's personal support for a strong UN role in Iraq and affirmed his commitment to achieving that end.

18. (C) Williams informed the group that visiting Egyptian Foreign Minister Abul Gheit (in New York for Quartet meetings) had said that the proposal for the Arab League to meet on Iraq June 22 is "too ambitious." While lauding the Canadian example (a government that had not supported the 2003 decision but subsequently played a helpful role in Iraq's stabilization), Williams observed ruefully that most governments in the region and in the international community at large were "far too passive" and thus far unwilling to act with "real engagement."

19. (C) Amb Jeffrey agreed that expectations about a surge in international interest in Iraq were unfulfilled, and attributed this situation in part to the lengthy time required for government formation. He proposed that once the new GOI was stood up, the UN should engage with the new government to ascertain its views. Presuming continued GOI interest in the project, the UN could then activate its ties in Europe and elsewhere, while the USG was prepared to use its influence with Gulf Arab states, particularly with regard to disbursement of earlier pledges, new pledges, and debt forgiveness. Within Iraq, Amb Jeffrey noted, the new GOI intended to focus on electricity and infrastructure in Baghdad, as well as housing and agriculture throughout the country. Subsidies needed to be tackled in line with IMF commitments. In addition to the economic aspects discussed, there is a set of "hard security issues," such as detainees,

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military operations, militias, DDR, and amnesty. As a general organizing principle of the compact, the international community would demand, and should demand, said Amb Jeffrey, conditionality -- a set of measurable benchmarks in exchange for assistance.

Iraq Peace Initiative

110. (C) Qazi explained to Amb Jeffrey the origins of his proposed Peace Initiative. He recounted the UN-sponsored travel of key Iraqi political and civic figures abroad for training and exchanges, and said those that had been to South Africa had been inspired by that country's experience with reconciliation and transitional justice. Admitting that South Africa's experience is "completely different," Qazi said nonetheless there was real interest by Iraqis in a grass roots, civil society based process to address Iraq's brutal past and current sectarian strife. The idea of a peace initiative included a charter or accord that would be agreed to by Iraq's communities. This charter might include codes of conduct for various Iraqi institutions. It would be bottom-up, conducted at the neighborhood level. The initiative, originally conceived by Iraqis, would be an Iraqi process, and the UN would merely play a supportive or facilitator role.

111. (C) Qazi said he had raised the idea with Muqtada al-Sadr, who had given a "qualified" positive response, pleased with the comparison to Sadr's code of honor proposal. (Sadr said, is this a U.S. idea? If so, I oppose. If not, the U.S. will obstruct.) Qazi had also discussed it with Ayatollah al-Sistani, who was "very positive," as well as the Prime Minister, the Tawafuq party and other political

leaders, all of whom were supportive, going so far as to propose preparatory and drafting committees. Harith al-Dari of the Muslim Ulemma Council was out of the country so they had not spoken. Qazi said the UN had some security concerns, and some questions as to how this initiative would affect other UN activities, and that these matters were under review.

¶12. (C) Amb Jeffrey urged Qazi to ensure this effort maintains an Iraqi face and is implemented through Iraqi processes. He recalled that Iraq's historic political transition had resulted in an inclusive democracy, and we hope an inclusive, broad-based government able to deal with the nation's problems -- the best antidote to sectarian strife. Thus no step should be taken that inadvertently fosters an alternative political process. He also advised Qazi to ensure that UNAMI deconflicts and coordinate this initiative with other related efforts.

¶13. (C) Qazi concluded the meeting by providing an update on his proposed Baghdad-based regional contact group, which he said would include all of Iraq's neighbors, including Iran and Syria, as well as Cairo, the Arab League, and possibly Bahrain. He said Foreign Minister Zebari had initially been cool to the idea, and they had agreed to revisit the subject after the government was formed.

Comment

¶14. (C) Despite real progress, including the UN's role in Iraq's election transition cycle, the political and security scars of 2002-2003 still occasionally throb at the UN's headquarters in New York. Gambari and his team are generally sympathetic to the U.S. desire for a stronger UN role in Iraq. But they will have to sell the proposed new U.S. initiative to a Secretary-General in the last months of his last year, a man who is focused on a legacy dominated by UN reform and may be reluctant to launch new initiatives.
BOLTON